

WOMAN: --in order to prove that there's people older.

ROY: OK, we have a queer over 42 coming in to the station. He's rushing in now. And when he gets here, we'll put him on the air.

CHRIS: must be the only one left.

JIMMY: No, it's me. I am, and my lover.

CHRIS: Oh, Well, two.

ROY: OK, if you're over 42 and you're queer-- queer meaning odd, not gay meaning happy--

JIMMY: I'm right here.

ROY: Exactly. Please call in. Let's see.

JIMMY: Larry Lango.

WOMAN: Larry Kramer.

JIMMY: I could go on and on and on. And those are just the big names.

ROY: OK well this part about anonymous sex through the holes of partitions in the infamous bathhouses is probably true. But so what? OK.

WOMAN: Well, how does he know?

ROY: Wait, didn't you see that--

JIMMY: I've never seen holes in partitions in the bathhouses.

ROY: Because you don't need holes.

JIMMY: Right.

ROY: Exactly. But he probably--

[INAUDIBLE]

ROY: Well, this is true. He probably saw that front page special on how all the young fags our age, meaning in their 20s, were trying to kill themselves by having unsafe sex in San Francisco. Let's see. "The same sick behavior is infecting college campuses all over the nation, even striking here at U of H."

CHRIS: Even at U of H.

ROY: This past summer. Now of course, it's been going on since U of H was built.

TRUNG: Excuse me, there. I have to interject here something. The gay community knows that if you want to have anonymous sex in a college bathroom, you go to the library bathroom.

- ROY:** Specifically--
- TRUNG:** All across the country, any college, period.
- ROY:** Specifically the second floor. Second floor library, any college campus in the nation, including the University of Washington in Seattle.
- JIMMY:** And most of the people you're going to find there--
- ROY:** Are people like-- are people like Gavin Kaczynski.
- JIMMY:** Well, people who are not out of the closet. And in fact, in public restrooms, by far, the most people that you're going to find there are married men with wives and children.
- ROY:** Jimmy speaks with the voice of experience.
- JIMMY:** That's right.
- CHRIS:** Gavin, you should have used a condom.
- ROY:** OK, let's see. 'Was greeted by 2 queers having sex in the middle of the room.' Well I guess if you're going to do it, might as well get it where the light can catch him. OK, let's see. I guess that's pretty much it besides the fact that, well, I mean we can't argue the fact that homosexuality isn't healthy. Unnatural and immoral.
- CHRIS:** Kind of like pork chips.
- ROY:** Pork chips.
- CHRIS:** Pork chips are kind of unhealthy.
- ROY:** OK, if you insist. Boy, people are calling in. I wonder what they're saying and who they're saying it to. Well, they're saying it to Sarah. But if you want to talk to Sarah, please call us at 5265738526 KPFT.
- WOMAN:** [INAUDIBLE]
- ROY:** She wants to be on the air? OK, great. We get to see if we can work the phones now. Now let's read the handy little list that Sarah made for us. OK, OK. . 14 now what do we do to 14? OK, let's try it now.
- [BEEP]
- Hello. OK let's try that once more. Oh, OK. Give the number out to the station. Lovely assistant screens calls. Which phone line you would like to take, make sure your headset is on, [INAUDIBLE] on-- yeah. Top button on 16. But that's the BBC. OK, something's not exactly working right. And well, we're going to go to a short musical interlude while we figure out what went wrong.
- WOMAN:** OK. Overwhelmingly, people are saying the guy's stupid, you need to know.
- ROY:** Thank you. But this time, the [INAUDIBLE] didn't work. What's going on? Why is my day not going well?
- WOMAN:** What are trying to do?
- [MUSIC - BJORK, "BIG TIME SENSUALITY"]

ROY: OK, that was Bjork, and the song was "Big Time Sensuality" from the album "Debut." And we were sitting here talking about Bjork and-- what band was she in before?

CHRIS: The Sugarcubes.

ROY: Right. And they broke up so she could pursue a solo career. And that's totally one of the hottest dance songs right now. Not that particular mix, but. And we also agreed that the video was just totally fabulous and we loved it. What are we going to do now? We've been making fun of people, So let's continue in that vein. Let's see. OK, we'll say that to make fun of that other--

CHRIS: Say that?

ROY: --group after we do that-- yeah, after we do the news piece. OK we just got this press release then from amfAR, American Foundation for AIDS Research. And I guess that's a pretty cool organization. But what we're going to make fun of is this fundraiser for amfAR being called Big Guns - Dance On Manhattan. And that is--

[LAUGHTER]

--going to be taking place. It's a culmination of Gay Pride weekend in New York City. And what's really funny and really just totally mind blowing-- and I don't know, just kind of ridiculous about this whole fundraiser is that Big Guns - Dance On Manhattan it's going to take place-- I'm sorry. It's going to be held aboard the aircraft carrier USS Intrepid.

Now what the hell are you doing holding a fundraiser for a group that is essentially queer on a USS Intrepid, an aircraft carrier affiliated with the very same organization that is discriminating against queers and people with AIDS on a daily basis. What was the thinking behind that? Are you going to go?

CHRIS: No. No, no.

ROY: But-- OK. Should you decide to go and you plunk down, let's see, \$50. \$50 for tickets. You can get them through Ticketmaster. You will be treated to a fantastic light show, fireworks, and according to Jason, the best dance music on the planet. Jason is one of the organizers.

And I guess they're trying to get around the whole thing about holding it aboard an aircraft carrier and seeming to be in support of the military by saying it's going to support amfAR's community-based clinical trials program, which is actually pretty good and Madonna has raised lots of money for that.

Now this is the description of what's going to happen. According to Jason, "As the sun sets over the horizon and day turns to night, over 6,000 of the hottest men from all over the country will dance the night away as the Manhattan skyline magically lights up."

And as Steve Troy noted, "Let's not overlook why we're producing this event. It's wonderful that we'll all be dancing and celebrating together. However, more importantly, we'll be raising money to support amfAR's program."

Now OK, let's go back to Jason's comment. OK, as the sun is setting and day is turning to night and all that stuff, 6,000 of the hottest men. What's wrong with that picture?

- CHRIS:** It sounds like the Miss America pageant.
- ROY:** Well my question is where the hell of the women? Are there no hot women in this country? Are women are not going to be allowed to the Dance On Manhattan aircraft carrier party?
- CHRIS:** Well, the whole Big Guns thing is-- it's that whole phallic thing.
- ROY:** Oh, I didn't think of that. OK, big guns.
- CHRIS:** Big, big guns. On the--
- ROY:** Wait, wasn't that the name of a porno video?
- CHRIS:** "Big Guns on the Intrepid"?
- ROY:** No, not on the Intrepid but just a playoff on that whole Top Gun thing.
- CHRIS:** Probably.
- ROY:** And why is only 6,000 of the hottest men going to be involved? What about the rest of us who are not among the 6,000 hottest men from all over the country? I don't know, I guess we're not wanted. I didn't mean to include you in that. Well yeah. Well, we're all hot. We know that. But what about those of us who aren't hot? OK. Anyway, we're through making fun of--
- JIMMY:** Dance On Manhattan.
- ROY:** There we go, good. I'm glad he got into that. What we're going to do now is we-- oh God, we should probably have made a station break. This is KPFT Houston 90.1 FM. You're listening to After Hours. Let's see. What we're going to go to now is a news piece on Asian and Pacific Islander queers. God, he's looking at me so strangely. And let's try that now.
- [INDIAN MUSIC PLAYING]
- NARRATOR:** The publication of this year's *A Lotus of Another Color - An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* gives added meaning to the phrase, "We are everywhere." This way out's Josy Catoggio talked with the editor of this compelling anthology, Rakesh Ratti.
- JOSY** For those of us that are geographically illiterate, what is considered South Asia?
- CATOGGIO:**
- RAKESH RATTI:** South Asia is considered basically various parts of the Indian subcontinent. So we're talking about the countries of Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, the Himalayan countries, Nepal and Bhutan, the Maldives, which is an Island country off the coast of India, and Bangladesh.
- JOSY** And I've learned from your book that this encompasses quite a few different languages and religions and
- CATOGGIO:** cultures. So it's pretty varied.

RAKESH RATTI: It is. There are 15 or 20 major languages in India itself. And if you go from one state to another, if you cross a border into one of the neighboring countries, Bangladesh or Sri Lanka, then you will find that culturally, there are a lot of differences as well.

JOSY There really isn't quite the same concept of a gay identity in a lot of cultures outside of the West.

CATOGGIO:

RAKESH RATTI: There isn't. And I would guess that in any culture, the central values of that culture and its heritage is going to define what the gay and lesbian culture of that society is going to be like. Lot of the folks who are South Asian but who were raised in the West, I think, do fit into more of the Western concept of what it means to be gay or lesbian.

Whereas those who are in South Asia at this point, or who spent the bulk of their time in South Asia, tend to think that we need to opt for a different identity within those cultures. There's also a fine line between the idea of looking for a separate identity in the context of a different culture but also the evolution of a gay and lesbian movement.

Because in some ways, if I look at what's going on with gay and lesbian and bisexual South Asians in South Asia, I could well make an argument that they are at a point where the movement was in the West, let's say, 40 years ago.

Because the groups are just coalescing now. And little by little, they're empowering themselves. And the gay and lesbian movement in this country came on the heels of other civil rights movements. In India, there is a fairly sizable feminist movement at this point.

And so most probably, the gay and lesbian movement will benefit from that. As to how much it will mirror the West, I think that's just something that time will tell.

JOSY Many of your contributors make the point that the Indian family is very strong and very patriarchal, and that **CATOGGIO:** there are definitely very different standards for sons and daughters. But also that it's extremely difficult for people to come out without somehow or other coming to terms with their family.

RAKESH RATTI: The South Asian sense of self is much more of an extended communal self. And so when there is conflict within the biological family or within the larger community one is a part of, then that also becomes an internal conflict more so. So there is more of an attempt to reconcile that.

And also there is more emphasis placed on conformity, period. So that anything in the way of individuation that we see in the West is going to be seen as being suspect somehow. So I think all of those differences, the stress that's placed on family, the stress that's placed on marriage and the continuity that provides within the culture, all of those also add to the pressure that South Asians feel.

JOSY Well I was very impressed with how many people's families really were very accepting, even though they may **CATOGGIO:** not have approved of homosexuality per se. They felt very strongly that they were not going to discard a son or a daughter because of who they were.

RAKESH RATTI: That's probably true. Because the boundaries of the family are so tight, oftentimes there are many things that you can divulge within the boundaries of the family and you may get grief for it.

But the main thing that the family worries about is that it remain within the boundaries of the family. When people do become public, then that adds extra pressure on the family and that creates situations in which the family may, well, walk away.

JOSY I was really intrigued by the long history that homosexuality has had in South Asian culture.

CATOGGIO:

RAKESH RATTI: Prior to the coming of Western cultures into India-- and I include in that category the Islamic people who came in maybe 600 or 800 years ago as well-- there was a time in India when sexuality was a fairly free topic. If you look at the books like the Kama Sutra, if you look at the carvings and the sides of temples that are 1,000, 2000 years old, you'll see that sexuality was dealt with on a fairly open level.

With the coming of the other cultures and-- more than the coming, it was an invasion. And those other cultures took control and they clamped down on that openness. And so what you have in India today are layers and layers of inhibitions that were put on there by other cultures.

JOSY Can you talk a little bit about the ways in which the religion impacts on homophobia? Because I know some

CATOGGIO: religions are a lot more specifically homophobic than others. I mean, they preach homophobia directly as opposed to being more tolerant.

RAKESH RATTI: Yeah. We have not come across anything, at least within the Hindu religion, that condemns homosexuality at all. And I think that's a very important point, because in many communities the religious basis of a condemnation is used as a launching pad to so much hatred.

In the Islamic religion, I believe there is some explicit condemnation. It comes out of the Judeo-Christian tradition as well. In Buddhism, I don't know of any condemnation of homosexuals. So I think that does impact how the community looks at us and sometimes takes away one basis upon which they can base any kind of hatred.

JOSY I was really intrigued by the fact that so many of the families would, at the same time, say that it was a Western disease and then also say, well then, we don't approve of it either. When in fact, there was considerable cultural basis for homosexuality having been accepted in their culture.

RAKESH RATTI: I think most people and most South Asians aren't aware of that part of their history. It's taken these people-- who have written in this book, for instance-- it's taken them a bit of effort to uncover that.

And also the people in South Asia today and South Asians growing up elsewhere see their own culture through the veil of all of the later influences, whether those be British or Islamic or whatever. And so they're not really in touch with that part of our history in which sexuality was a much more free arena.

JOSY Do you think that's a focus to some extent of the South Asian gay and lesbian people to educate their own culture, about their heritage and their roots?

RAKESH RATTI: I think it definitely has to be a part of it. I have mixed feelings about the whole idea of digging up the past to validate who we are today. On the one hand, I think it's great because, one, that gives us a sense of continuity.

If we're a culturally defined group, then as gays and lesbians and bisexuals, all of the gay and lesbian folk who may have lived in any culture at any time in the sense were our forbearers. And that is our line of continuity.

So in that sense, I think, looking back into the past and looking for the time when we were more accepted and a part of the fabric is also looking back at our own history. The only qualm that I have with it is that at this point in my life, I think that I need nothing to validate who I am. My existence is valid simply because I exist.

So I do have that one qualm about it. But other than that, I think it has to be an important part of the education process.

JOSY CATOGGIO: This is Josy Catoggio for *This Way Out*, and my guest is Rakesh Ratti, who is the editor of *A Lotus of Another Color - An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*. You have a wonderful article in the book about gay men and feminism, and about men and feminism in general. When did you begin to define yourself as a feminist?

RAKESH RATTI: I think I was probably defining myself as a feminist unconsciously when I was 15, I grew up in a household where there was a huge double standard and I hated the way that my father ran the family. And the way that he simply had no respect, in my eyes, for my mother as a separate being.

She was more of an appendage to him, I didn't like the way that my sisters had to be subservient to the brothers, even though I had benefited from that a great deal. And so I found myself very often in heated arguments within the family about the way that women were treated.

And I guess on some level, I was probably reacting to simply people being oppressed, because I had already been oppressed as an ethnic minority and expected to be oppressed as a gay person. So it started then.

And then as I read a little more about the gay and lesbian subject and I pored through the local libraries trying to find out everything because I really wanted to know the full range, I came across a great deal that was written by women. And also a lot of articles and books that questioned gender roles and the patriarchal structure that we have.

And it really made sense. It really made sense to me that so much of the oppression that we experience as gays and lesbians is also a part of that patriarchal system. And that that system is threatened by us as gays and lesbians just as it's threatened by women being empowered. And I think once you make that leap-- I can't understand how a man could not be a feminist.

JOSY CATOGGIO: And yet when you joined gay and lesbian organizations, you were frequently surprised by how sexist some of the men were.

RAKESH RATTI: And I still am. It hasn't changed enough yet. And the more that the men and women in our community come together and work together, I think the men will have to face the fact that they have to share power and that they are doing to the women in our community what the society in general is doing to us.

JOSY CATOGGIO: Do you think the book *A Lotus of Another Color* will help white lesbians and gays understand South Asian lesbians and gays better?

RAKESH RATTI: I think it will as long as they're willing to pick up the book, read it with an open mind. Too often in our community, people do not pick up books that are about other people. And I don't really know what I can say to them to really be more open to these things.

Personally, if I had my way, every card carrying queer would have on their shelves at home all of these books. Whether it's *A Lotus of Another Color* about gay and lesbian South Asians, *In The Life*, about African-American gay men, or *Long Time Passing* about older lesbians, *Living the Spirit* about Native Americans.

I think all of these books really have a lot to communicate to each one of us and can help us to come together more cohesively as a community.

JOSY Yes, I think if we truly are going to be the rainbow community that we really are, we really ought to educate ourselves about all of the different gay and lesbian peoples there are. Because we're a little mini United Nations in our community.

RAKESH RATTI: We are. That's the most unique thing about us as a subculture is that we have connections with so many different communities. And really, if you look at that, that really has a lot of positive potential.

And in understanding one another, I think the most important thing also is to hear one another in our own words. Just as we have not wanted to be defined by the heterosexual community around us in its words, because that is so often full of misinformation.

And then at the same time, we have to acknowledge that the various facets of our own community want to be defined through their own words as well. And we need to go ahead and listen to them when they do speak out.

JOSY There are so many different people in the lesbian and gay community. And I think it's been really wonderful, for me at least, to read *A Lotus of Another Color* and to discover this whole other level of different cultures and languages and religious traditions that give me a completely different perspective on what it means to be gay or lesbian.

RAKESH RATTI: Well, thanks. I can appreciate that feedback.

JOSY For *This Way Out*, this has been Josy Catoggio. I've been talking with Rakesh Ratti who is the editor of *A Lotus of Another Color - An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*.

[INDIAN MUSIC PLAYING]

ROY: OK, that was Cracker and the song was *Low*. And of course that's the song with the fabulous video featuring that dyke herself, Sandra Bernhard. But before we were-- I don't know, entertained by Cracker, we had an interview with an Indian-- he was Indian, correct?

CHRIS: I believe so.

ROY: Hello, hello. Man talking about what it's like or talking about his experience as an Asian man. So we have two Asian men in the studio tonight.

CHRIS: This studio is blessed.

ROY: Well, that's what I thought. I bow down before your Asianness.

CHRIS: Wow.

ROY: Well, it's true. OK, but anyway, what are your thoughts on the interview?

- CHRIS:** I thought the interview was excellent, actually. He was very articulate and the interviewer was very, very much intrigued.
- ROY:** Well, she kept using that word, intrigued.
- CHRIS:** Exactly. But it was very-- you don't hear a lot about what is going on with gays, lesbians and bisexuals in South Asia in general. I think I've seen a total of maybe one or two pieces of writing about that particular subject.
- ROY:** But in all honesty, I mean you don't see very much about people of Asian descent living here in America who are queer. Why do you think that is?
- CHRIS:** Oh I think part of it is cultural. Part of it is-- I don't know. To be perfectly honest, I don't see much of South Asians here anyway.
- ROY:** Let's expand it beyond South Asia, OK. Let's encompass the realm of Asian peoples.
- CHRIS:** OK.
- ROY:** OK. Why don't we see a whole lot of information, media attention and so on about Asian people?
- CHRIS:** I think it's because everyone's in the closet.
- ROY:** But you're not.
- CHRIS:** Well, of course, I'm not. But I think most people are, actually. And a large part of that is cultural, although that particular excuse can only be taken so far. And beyond that, it's just whining, really. That's all I hear.
- ROY:** And that's what we queers are good at, whining about discrimination.
- CHRIS:** Yeah, about all those gay and lesbian problems.
- ROY:** No, not gay. Gay means happy. Queer, queer means odd.
- CHRIS:** Sorry, queer problems.
- ROY:** OK, well what are you going to do to make the Asian queer community more visible?
- CHRIS:** Well actually, there is an organization in Houston right now called Asians and Friends of Houston. And you would think that it's a queer group, quote unquote "queer." And I'll tell you why.
- You would think with a group named Asians and Friends of Houston that they would be supportive, they would at least take some type of a lead in the gay-- sorry, the queer Asian community in Houston, both politically and socially. But apparently, they don't. Apparently, this group is solely a social party group.
- And that's kind of unfortunate, because there is obviously a great need for some type of leadership in this city. Or it's just the closet for everyone. I have a copy of the most recent newsletter and it's very-- and it's called TexAsians. TexAsians. TexAsians. And there's a little description by their president, who writes the entire newsletter by himself.
- ROY:** The white president.

- CHRIS:** The white president who apparently doesn't get any help or won't let people help him write the newsletter.
- ROY:** Well, of course. If you're the sole spokesperson for the group.
- CHRIS:** Right. But anyway, this is what he writes about the group. As we have stated before-- this is, by the way, to present members. "As we have stated before, we want your membership and participation in A&FH," that's Asians and Friends of Houston-- "to be fun." And fun is in all capitals, just for emphasis.
- "We do not want you to feel pressured into joining or coerced by one of our members. A&FH is a chance to meet lots of people. Just look at our recent anniversary party and our February Chinese New Year celebrations. But we do not have nor do we intend to ever have a," quote unquote, "'meat market' mentality." Well that's very nice in writing.
- TRUNG:** [INAUDIBLE] never have?
- CHRIS:** We do not have nor do we intend to ever have. And that's that sounds nice and writing but that's basically not the truth. Basically the group is packed with people with that mentality.
- ROY:** What about the couple of sentences after that?
- CHRIS:** Oh, this is the best part. "Our members are very interesting and also very friendly people."
- ROY:** Sounds like a meat market mentality to me.
- CHRIS:** Yeah, I would say so.
- TRUNG:** Friendly, but not too interesting.
- CHRIS:** And then there's some insight here. "The group provides you with the opportunity to meet other people like you and also to meet people who are different from you." So basically get to meet everyone.
- ROY:** Why do I get the feeling that this newsletter was written with white readers in mind? Why do I get the feeling that he's saying, when he capitalizes the words interesting and friendly, that he's meaning that white people should feel comfortable because they can come and have their pick of Asian boys?
- I don't know, maybe it's just me. And maybe I have no place in this discussion because I'm not Asian, I'm Black. But it just seems to me that this is another example of white men who want colored penises. And they've created this little group to do it.
- CHRIS:** Well of course, this group has only Asians and whites in it. There are no non-Asian or non-white, non Asian slash whites.
- ROY:** Wait, there was a potluck dinner coming up, right?
- CHRIS:** Oh, yes. There is a potluck dinner party coming up in, I think, at the end of March or something. They have a potluck party.
- ROY:** Oh wait a minute.
- CHRIS:** Every day, it seems, but.

ROY: Oh, is there something after that? I can't go to that one. But you're going to be my date, by the way.

CHRIS: At the potluck party?

ROY: Well, not this one but the one future event.

CHRIS: The--

ROY: Well, a future event because I can't go to the one tonight.

CHRIS: Well, we'll go to the next potluck party then.

ROY: Wait, the 19th is a Saturday, right? I can go to that one. OK, we'll go. OK, are you going to go, Trung?

TRUNG: Oh, definitely.

ROY: OK, great.

CHRIS: You'll have to pay a \$5 admission fee because you're a non-member.

ROY: Well it'll probably be more because I'm also Black. Let's see. It's also a birthday of one of the Asians and Friends members.

CHRIS: Oh, that's right. In the newsletter-- and this was a nice reminder for me. But apparently, Elizabeth Lee--

ROY: Also known as Vivian.

CHRIS: Who is also known as Vivian, very, very good friend of ours, who was supposed to be here tonight--

ROY: Frequent guest on the program.

CHRIS: Her birthday is on April 7th. And it's in--

ROY: Hey, why do we-- OK, OK. This is what we'll do. Since it's Vivian's birthday coming up on April 7th and we all love her because she's fabulous and she's queer, why don't you guys all send birthday cards to the station for Vivian? Let's see. After Hours, care of KPFT, 419 Lovett Boulevard. What's the zip code?

- 77006.

ROY: 77006.

JIMMY: Not just a zip code--

ROY: A way of life. Anyway, please remember to send birthday cards for Vivian Lee, whose birthday is April 7th, to After Hours, care of KPFT, 419 Lovett Boulevard, 77006. And let's see, what are we going to do now? We're going to take a brief musical break so that Jimmy can come back with [? Renee Chardone ?]. And the queer music sound. Let's see. Let's do it now.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

BABY GRAMPS: Yes, yes. If you like the sounds that you're hearing, you can hear this music and other hip hop music on an underground culture that you won't hear anywhere else but here, on Real Radio 90.1, each and every Sunday as we do it to you.

From midnight to 5:30 AM Monday morning when you hear GT, Cipher, Double R Rad Richards, Mad Matt, and yours truly, the gray-haired kid himself, Baby Gramps. On Real Radio 90.1, KPFT Houston.